

A GENERATION OF PEACE IN THE SINAI

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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Israel has faced persistent conflict from multiple external threats since its inception as a nation. Working collectively and over time, these external threats have overtly and covertly focused on isolating, weakening, and destroying the Israeli state. For a significant period of time, one of the major threats poised against Israel came from the nation of Egypt. Why is it that there now seems to be a sustained peace between the governments of Egypt and Israel? This project will prove the enduring need for peacekeeping initiatives between these two nations is a valid strategic security requirement for the US. This project will also examine if this model of peaceful co-existence is a strategy template for peace keeping considerations in regard to Israel's other contested borders, which would further benefit the US, if not the whole global community.

A GENERATION OF PEACE IN THE SINAI

Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.

—George W. Bush

Israel has faced persistent conflict from multiple external threats since its inception as a nation. Working collectively and over time, these external threats have overtly and covertly focused on isolating, weakening, and destroying the Israeli state. For a significant period of time, one of the major threats poised against Israel came from the nation of Egypt. Why is it that there now seems to be a sustained peace between the governments of Egypt and Israel? This project will prove the enduring need for peacekeeping initiatives between these two nations is a valid strategic security requirement for the US. This project will also examine if this model of peaceful co-existence is a strategy template for peacekeeping considerations in regard to Israel's other contested borders, which would further benefit the US, if not the whole global community.

The Creation of the Jewish State of Israel

In order to understand the underlying conflict that remains the catalyst for the longstanding dispute between Israel and its Arab neighbors, we must examine the regional conditions that existed prior to Israel becoming a nation. Palestine is the name given by Arabs to an area in the Middle East. This area was absorbed into the Ottoman

Empire in 1517, and remained under the rule of the Turks until they were defeated by British forces near the end of World War I.

In the League of Nations peace talks that ensued after the end of the World War I, portions of the former Ottoman Empire were handed over to France, and other portions were handed over to Britain. Britain received colonial control of Palestine from this mandate in 1917, and then governed this relatively small geographic area as a colony until 1947. Palestine, as described in the bible as a land of milk and honey was in fact a barren, rocky, neglected and inhospitable land with malaria-infested swamps.¹

The problem with this post war solution was that two different cultures claimed rights to this land. The Jews claimed that the land that they called *Eretz Yisrael* was their traditional and spiritual home, one promised by God to Abraham and to his people. The Arabs of Palestine also regarded this same land as their rightful home for posterity. As the Arabs saw it, this promise from God included them since they were descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son by his concubine Ketirah.² The Jews felt that *Eretz Yisrael* was their only safe haven based on years of persecution in other countries. The Arabs of Palestine felt resentment that the Jews had moved in and out of Palestine over the past centuries, while the Arabs had never abandoned this land.³

At the end of the First World War the population of Arabs in Palestine numbered around 600,000, in contrast to about 85,000 Jews, but in the aftermath of the war the Jewish population steadily increased. The Jewish community had also legally purchased large tracts of land in Palestine from greedy Arab absentee landlords.

In addition to this Arab-Jewish tension, the British government increasingly provided public and political support for the idea of a "National Home" for the Jews in

Palestine.⁴ During this time both the Arab and the Jewish communities believed that they had each been given clear and documented right to the contested land. The Arabs used the McMahon Agreement as evidence. This agreement had been initiated by Britain during the hostilities of WWI and was interpreted by the Arabs that Palestine was to be the reward for help given to the Allies in defeating the Turks who were supporting the Germans.⁵ The Jews used the Balfour Declaration as evidence. The Balfour Declaration had been written by then British Foreign Secretary James Balfour, who declared his (and British) support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the area known as Palestine. Britain's other allies during the war, including the United States, offered their support to this declaration as well.⁶

In the 1920's, Jewish people from all over the world began to migrate to their believed promised land. Each side in this dispute, armed with their documents of choice, believed that they had established clear and legal claim of rightful ownership for this land, and the roots of this longstanding conflict were born. This left the British stuck in the middle, acting as a referee for their own colony, a referee that neither side felt was fair to their cause as the British attempted to maintain peace in the colony. Significant to this debate, is a problem that remains unresolved today: control of the city of Jerusalem, especially important due to its religious value for both the Arab and Jewish communities.

The British ultimately determined in 1939 that a compromise was unattainable between the two sides and imposed their own armed solution to the problem, which led to insurgent warfare focused at the British colonial force from both Jewish and Arab sides. At the close of World War II, at the same time Britain ended its colonial interest

in India, it also determined that there was no longer a valid reason to pursue a colonial policy in Palestine, especially one that had little support at home and abroad.⁷

In 1947 the British government worked to turn the Palestine problem over to the recently formed UN for final resolution to the internal conflict, and began evacuation of their colony even before the UN had fully accepted the responsibility. The UN appointed a special committee to investigate the situation and determine a resolution to the conflict. The committee determined that the 10,000 square miles of Palestine would be partitioned, with 4,300 square miles belonging to the Arabs, and 5,700 square miles belonging to the Jews. Bethlehem and Jerusalem would come under United Nations control. The UN vote passed, with 10 abstentions, 33 yes, and 13 no votes. All Islamic Nation members individually voted no to the resolution.⁸

In December 1947 the remaining British armed forces departed Palestine, and with no UN forces yet in place to implement UN resolution 18, which partitioned Palestine, street fighting broke out between Jews and Arabs in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. The fierce clashes and reprisals that followed would eventually turn Palestine into anarchy.⁹ The immediate strategic aim of the Jewish effort was focused on gaining effective control over the territory allotted them by the UN mandate, and to secure communications with thirty-three Jewish settlements that fell outside of the UN partition plan. The strategic focus of the Palestinians at this time was on prevention of the UN partition of Palestine. They would execute this by disrupting and strangling the Jewish lines of communication, and then cut off the Jewish settlements through control of the road systems.¹⁰

The 1948 War of Jewish Independence

On the 14th of May 1948, the last diplomatic element of the British government left Palestine bound for England. The Jewish leadership in Palestine determined that the land was now theirs, and announced to the world that the Jewish State of Israel had now been established. These events both occurred within hours of each other. That evening the president of the United States, Harry Truman recognized the Jewish state. The recognition of Israel by a superpower was a sign to the world of welcoming Israel into the family of nations.¹¹

In the Arab world a cry for justice went out. The results brought about military and financial support for the Palestinians from their neighbors in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.¹² What had been a civil war between the Jews and the Palestinians now turned almost overnight into a regional conflict between an Arab Legion and the Jewish community.

Steady fighting continued for weeks before a cease fire mandate was established by the UN. Two days before the truce was set to expire, the Jews perceived the Arabs would not extend the cease fire and they attacked the Arab Legion. Fighting went on for ten more days in which the battle was clearly going in favor of the Jews. They pushed the Arab Legion and the Arab population outward, controlling more land than what was provided for in the original UN partition mandate.¹³ In March 1949, the war ended through diplomatic effort from the outside world. The results were that the Jews had held back the Arab Legion and had acquired approximately 2,500 more acres of land than the original UN partition had allocated them. The UN brokered post conflict negotiations providing for give and take on the land boundaries that had resulted from

the armed conflict. These new borders were ones that neither side was completely satisfied with, but were willing to accept at the time to end the fighting.

The 1948 war validated that the Jewish state was not only willing to fight, but capable of defending itself.¹⁴ As the war ended and the new Jewish State of Israel began to govern, the top priority of Jewish leadership became the development of a national system to build an armed force in order to protect the new state from any future attacks.

The 1956 Sinai Campaign

In July 1956 Egyptian President Nasser announced that his country intended to nationalize the Suez Canal, and would use the money gained from charging for its use to fund the Aswan Dam project. This dam project was important for crop irrigation and power generation for Egypt, and Nasser was eager to fund it. The US had just announced that it would not pay for the dam project, nor would it allow the funding of the project to occur through the world banking system, a stance adopted due to recent Egyptian efforts to buy weapon technology and arms from Russia. The Suez Canal had been built and owned by British and French shareholders in 1869 to eliminate the need for shipping lanes traversing around Africa when bound for Europe.¹⁵

Nasser's decree would leave European shipping dependent not on an international waterway, but one in the control of Egypt. Britain and France began to consider military action against Egypt, and Israel was invited to join the anti-Egyptian coalition.¹⁶

For several years the Egyptians had been harassing the southern shipping lanes of Israel through blockage of the Straits of Tiran on the Red Sea near Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, and Israel had declared in May 1955 that if the Egyptian blockade was not

removed and freedom of navigation restored to the Straits of Tiran within a year, Israel would attack to open free access to southern Israeli ports. The invitation from Britain and France to take action against Egypt was seen by the Israelis as an opportunity.¹⁷

Britain, France, and Israel developed a concept that envisioned an Israeli attack into Egypt from the east towards the Suez Canal, seizing the canal. Once the canal was under Israeli control, the French and British would negotiate with the Egyptians to establish their military forces along the canal to ensure freedom of passage through the canal. The Israelis would then move their forces to a point ten miles east of the canal and occupy the Sinai. If the Egyptians refused the negotiation, Britain and France would send in their military in order to force this action to occur.¹⁸

The campaign went forward as planned in late October 1956. By the first week of November the Israeli Defense Force had met its objectives. The British and French then called for a withdrawal of forces in the area of the Suez Canal from both sides as planned. When Egypt did not immediately comply, the British Air Force attacked Egyptian air bases. The UN Security Council mounted diplomatic efforts to bring about a cease fire as the British and French governments worked to stall the process. Public opinion in both France and England was also against the hostilities, and on 5 November the French and British governments caved from the pressure of the UN and declared a cease fire with Egypt. The UN then began the process of negotiations between Israel and Egypt to settle the issue of returning the land now occupied by Israel in the Sinai.¹⁹

The creation of a UN Emergency Force (UNEF) was proposed by the Canadian Government and accepted by the United Nations to broker the peace. Israel was reluctant to give back many of the land gains it had won during the campaign,

specifically the Straits of Tiran and the Gaza Strip, both seen as key terrain to the future survival of Israel.²⁰ Only through political pressure applied on Israel by the United States, and guarantees made by both the UN and US ensuring free movement of shipping from the Red Sea to Israel, was Israel convinced to relinquish the land gains that it had made. In addition, Israel would request the UN to oversee the administration of the Gaza Strip. The Arab world, with internal differences and disagreements among themselves showed solidarity aligned through the Arab League remaining focused on one common goal: the destruction of the State of Israel and the return of Palestine to the Arab world.

The Six Day War, 1967

The period between 1956 and 1967 saw continued land based regional conflict. Many of these were Arab against Arab in nature. For example, Egypt, with a large and now Soviet equipped military, became engaged in a bloody civil war in Yemen and dealt with a revolt in Egyptian occupied Syria. Israel focused on maintaining diligent intelligence activities to monitor threats and build its military capabilities. Israel also remained contained within the negotiated land settlements of the previous conflict, and was content with the status quo.

At an Arab heads of state summit meeting in Cairo in 1964 all Arab governments in attendance decided in favor of a proposal to divert the flow of the river Jordan; away from Israel. At the same conference it was determined to establish a Palestinian movement for the return of Palestine, the action that gave birth to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Over one million US dollars were allocated by the heads of state to fund the movement.²¹

The Palestine Covenant established by the PLO became the political basis behind the organization. The stated goal of the PLO was, and still is, the complete destruction of the Jewish State. The techniques used were to create provocation aimed at Israel along its borders. The intent was to entice the Israelis to respond in a manner that would in turn cause one of its Arab neighbors to respond back to Israel.

In May 1967 it was reported to Egypt by the Soviets that Israel had massed 11 brigades on the Syrian border and was preparing to invade that nation. History has shown this to be false, but acting on this information; Nasser demanded the withdrawal of the UNEF from the Sinai. The serving UN Secretary General, without consulting the UN Security Council, complied and removed the UNEF from the Sinai. Nasser began to mass thousands of Egyptian military troops in the Sinai aimed at Israel, and once again closed the Straits of Tiran to all ships bound to or from Israel. The major world powers attempted to establish a naval force to act on the assurances that had been made to Israel at the conclusion of hostilities in 1956, but none emerged.²² The world looked on as Arab military contingents from other countries arrived in support of Egypt. At the UN, Arab nations, along with the Soviet Union, worked to slow any response or political defusing attempted by the outside world.²³ By early June Israel had mobilized its entire military capability and launched a pre-emptive air strike aimed at the destruction of the Egyptian air force and airfield infrastructures. It would then turn its air power against the air capabilities of Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. By the end of the first day, the Israeli air force had scored major defeats against all intended targets.²⁴ Once air superiority was established, the Israeli air force turned its focus on the Egyptian ground forces. Israeli ground units began to push the Egyptians back across the Suez Canal, where the

Israelis held the Egyptian forces until the end of the war.²⁵ The war on the Jordanian front began on 5 June, as the Jordanians attacked into Israel attempting to occupy the UN headquarters in Jerusalem. The Israelis counterattacked by destroying Jordan's airbases and its air force. On 8 June, Israel attacked Syria in the Golan Heights in retaliation for Syria's provision of air support to Jordan's ground force attacks in the days before. Before the end of the day, the Six Day War would be over, and the Arab attack on Israel would be soundly defeated. Israel now controlled over eighteen times the ground area that had been provided for it in the original plan to partition Palestine.²⁶

The Yom Kippur War, 1973

The Egyptian Army was not totally destroyed in the war of 1967, it was badly crippled and beaten, but had not been destroyed. The Israelis continued to hold and defend the Sinai as a buffer between the two countries. By early 1968, Russian arms imports had boosted the Egyptian military to seventy percent of the equipment that it had on hand prior to the 1967 war. The Egyptian strategy was to interdict and harass the Israeli line holding the Suez Canal, and the Israeli strategy was to hold the Egyptians out of the Sinai to maintain the buffer between the two countries. Military actions went on between both sides at varying degrees of intensity, which became a defensive stalemate. Israel continued to be harassed by both Jordan and Syria during the post war period as well. Raids, artillery battles, and air incursions were a daily activity during this period of the conflict, although a cease fire between all sides was negotiated with US help in July 1970.²⁷

In late 1970, after the death of Egyptian President Nasser, a new Egyptian President took office; Anwar el-Sadat. Sadat was initially interested in opening a

dialogue with Israel with the aim of returning the Sinai to Egypt in exchange for a peaceful existence with Israel, but Israel was not interested. The memory of events surrounding the 1956 and 1967 wars was too large an obstacle for Israel to trust that the Egyptians would leave Israel in peace.²⁸ As Sadat's diplomatic efforts to deal directly with Israel failed, Sadat turned his diplomatic efforts toward an appeal to the US. The US Secretary of State and Egyptian Foreign Minister discussed the situation, but the United States felt that its strategic partner in the Middle East was Israel and did not trust Egypt to follow through on its word.²⁹ In an attempt to prove his intentions, Sadat removed all 15,000 Soviet military advisors from Egypt, but this still did not sway the US administration to intercede on Egypt's behalf. With no success in his political efforts, Sadat began preparations to remove Israel from the Sinai with military force. One discussion with Syria was all that was needed for them to be a committed partner in the attack against the Israelis. Other Arab countries one by one offered financial support for the effort.³⁰

On 6 October 1973, Egypt attacked across the Sinai, and the Syrians attacked into the Golan Heights. Israel was taken completely by surprise. The initial effort of the Arab nations was to do exactly as the Israelis had done to them in the 1967 war: take out their air force and airstrips.³¹ In the first days of the war Israel was pushed back by the Egyptians in the Sinai, and the Syrian attack in the Golan Heights was also successful. The Israelis were most concerned about the Syrian advances, as they had no buffer into Israel with Syria. On 7 October, Israel pushed all of its reserve effort in the fight with Syria, taking what air power it had left to strike strategic targets in that nation. By 9 October, the Syrians were in retreat.³² By 14 October, with only the

Egyptians remaining, the Israeli military was now fully mobilized. The Egyptians' overconfidence had caused them to overreach their initial objective of securing the far side of the Suez Canal. They had pushed farther than their missiles could reach, and farther than they could logistically support. With more Israeli forces now available due to full mobilization, and Israeli armored units freed from engagement on the Syrian border, the total offensive focus was on the Egyptians. The battle soon became a one sided victory for the Israelis, with multiple division-sized Egyptian units surrounded and cut off by the Israelis in the Sinai.³³ On 23 October, due mainly to US and Soviet political pressure put on Israel, the Yom Kippur hostilities ended. At that point, the Israeli military was less than 100 kilometers from Cairo, and 45 kilometers from Damascus.³⁴

The Generation of Peace Begins Through Diplomacy and Negotiation

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 340 on 25 October 1973. This resolution called for redeployment of the UNEF into the Sinai to supervise the cease fire, oversee the disengagement between Egypt and Israel, and to act as a buffer between the two sides.³⁵ The first elements of this peacekeeping force had arrived in Egypt by the end of October 1973. The force authorized by the resolution was to be 7,000 peacekeepers. The high-water mark of the force turned out to number around 4,000 peacekeepers, however, with none from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, as stated in the UN resolution. Both Egyptian and Israeli military officers were attached to the UNEF to participate in monitoring activities.³⁶

In the months that followed the 1973 war it is interesting to note that the peace negotiations that took place were predominantly conducted by the United States

through Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. Kissinger also received assistance from Saudi Arabia working as a go between when required. Noticeably absent from this negotiation effort was the UN.³⁷

In January of 1974 Kissinger had negotiated an agreement between the two sides officially ending the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This peace agreement became known as the Sinai I agreement.³⁸ Kissinger was able to accomplish this by focusing on the interests of each side of the conflict instead of their positions. "Israel's interests lay in security; they did not want Egyptian tanks poised on their border ready to roll across at any time. Egypt's interest lay in its sovereignty; the Sinai had been a part of Egypt since the time of the Pharaohs."³⁹ The UNEF remained in place and continued to monitor and buffer the two sides during the negotiations and in the aftermath of the original Sinai peace accords. In September 1975, almost two years after the end of the Yom Kippur War, Kissinger negotiated a second peace agreement between the two sides that committed Egypt to pursue only peaceful means now or in the future in regard to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. This settlement called Sinai II, allowed for a huge commitment of US economic resources to Israel, and some to Egypt. With these commitments and assurance that the United States would provide economic support to Israel, Israel would withdraw to a point 40 miles east of the Suez Canal, giving Egypt back a portion of the Sinai. The United States also pledged to set up and man observation points with US civilian observers called the Sinai Field Mission (SFM) to monitor both sides for any violations of the peace settlement. These US civilian observers were in addition to the UNEF already in place, and were important to Israel

due to the fact that they had been previously let down by the UNEF, and they did not trust their reliability.⁴⁰

The work of the civilian observers and the UNEF paid off by maintaining the peace in the Sinai until 24 July 1979. On this date the UN Security Council failed to reinstate the mandate to maintain the UNEF in the Sinai. This was a direct result of a Soviet veto of the UN vote to extend the UNEF. In March of that year, recognizing the potential peril of removing UNEF peacekeepers from the Sinai, the Carter administration began to negotiate directly with both Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli President Begin in an effort to establish a peace deal between the two sides prior to the UNEF being withdrawn from the Sinai. The result was a US-brokered peace agreement known as the Camp David Peace Accords.⁴¹

In March 1981, after almost two years of debate at the UN, the UNEF was withdrawn from the Sinai. The Camp David Peace Accords had anticipated this move, and called for an independent international peacekeeping force to take up the role as peacekeepers in the Sinai if the UNEF was pulled out. The name given to this effort was the Multi-National Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai.⁴² Significant to this peace settlement was that Israel would return the Sinai in its entirety to Egypt in exchange for the independent peacekeepers; in return Egypt would recognize the nation of Israel and commit to working out differences between the two countries through diplomacy rather than through military means.

The Success of the Multinational Force and Observers

On 17 March 1982 the first elements of the newly formed MFO arrived in the Sinai desert to implement and supervise the peace treaty protocols outlined in the

Camp David Accords. The framework of the peace agreement used the Sinai as a buffer zone between the two countries. The Sinai was divided into four zones: A through D, as depicted in Figure 1. Zones A and B would allow for an agreed-upon number of Egyptian military forces, equipment, and border guards; and Zone D would allow the same for Israel. Zone C would establish the buffer and belong to the MFO to conduct the peacekeeping operation. Three battalion-size peacekeeping units would be required to take over and then expand the positions created by the UNEF to observe and report potential violations of the peace accords.

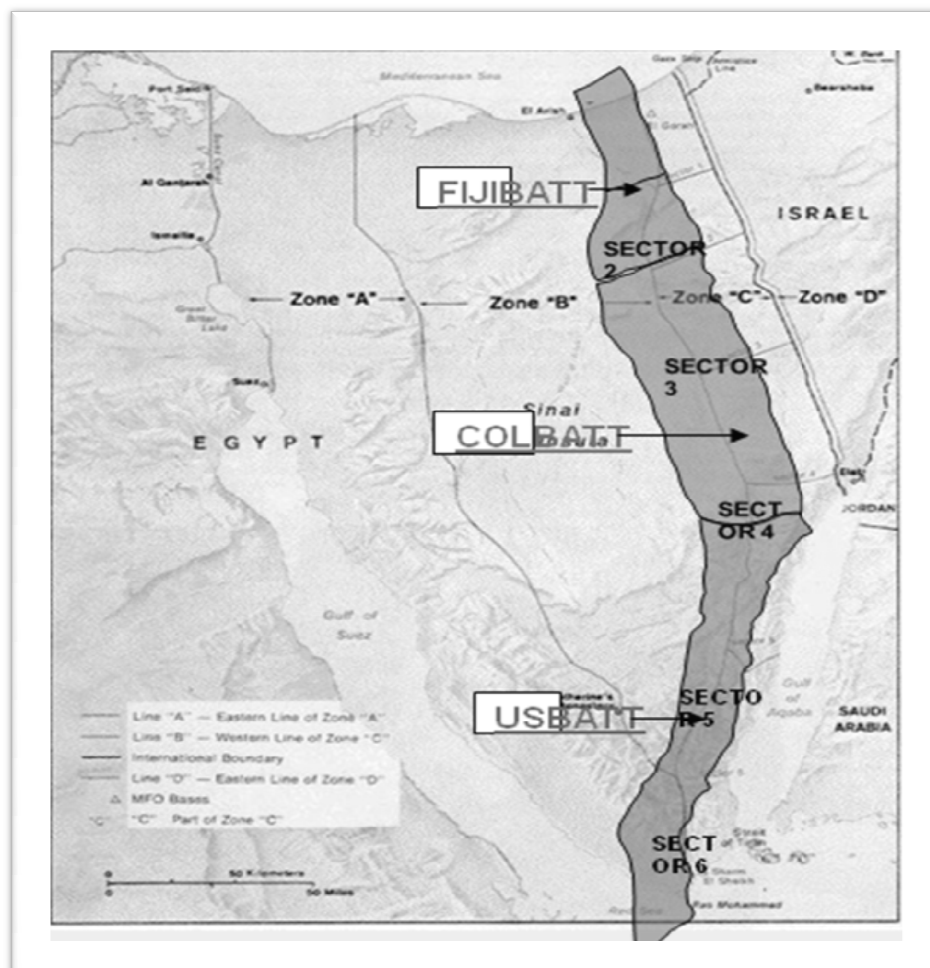


Figure 1: Map of Sinai Treaty Zones A-D⁴³

The US had originally intended to make the observers all civilians, and refrain from the commitment of military forces for this mission. Israel was adamant that the US commit military forces to ensure a long term and stable American commitment. The already established US civilian observers from the Sinai Field Mission would remain in place to become the Civilian Observer Unit (COU) and transition their efforts to work directly for the MFO, monitoring all four zones of the Sinai. Military Liaison Officers from both Egypt and Israel would continue to work with the civilian observers as they conducted their activities to ensure the peace accords were adhered to.

Today, the day to day purpose of the MFO is unchanged from its inception: to observe and report any potential violations of the treaty of peace, and subsequently work any real or perceived issues through diplomatic efforts. The structure that facilitates this is built on the units on the ground in the Sinai, military liaison elements from both Egypt and Israel ensuring transparency to both sides, and a robust diplomatic element. The diplomatic effort consists of the MFO Headquarters in Rome, led by a US Ambassador as the Director General, a MFO consulate in Cairo Egypt, and a MFO consulate in Tel Aviv, Israel. Any reported potential treaty violations delivered from the force or reported by any outside elements are worked through these diplomatic lanes to mitigate and then resolve issues between the parties.

To perform its mission, the MFO requires funding, military equipment, and military manpower. The funding for this peacekeeping force comes principally from equal cost shares that the US, Egypt, and Israel pay annually for the continuation of the effort. The annual budget for this mission has remained constant since 1995 at roughly 51 million dollars per year. Other nations have made financial donations to the effort

over the 26 years the mission has been conducted. The military equipment required is relatively small to conduct this mission: the US supplies and operates the small fleet of rotary wing aircraft; France supplies and operates one fixed wing aircraft; Italy supplies and mans three coastal patrol boats to patrol the Straits of Tiran; and the Japanese fund procurement of the fleet of vehicles required for the force to operate within Zone C. The peacekeepers performing the mission on the ground are restricted by the terms of the treaty to conduct the mission with constraints on the types of equipment they can use for the mission. For example, no indirect fire assets can be used in the mission, nor can they be brought in for training purposes. No satellite enhanced equipment such as a PLGR can be brought in to use in the mission. All FM radio transmissions must be in the clear, and day to day operations are performed on MFO radio systems, not US military systems. No tactical vehicles are used during operations; all MFO vehicles are clearly identified as white and orange Non-tactical vehicles (NTVs). The purpose behind these restrictions is to ensure transparency of the MFO to both sides, and to reinforce that the MFO is in place to observe and report potential violations of the treaty, not to mandate by the use of military force, the peace treaty itself. The individual and crew served weapons carried by the members of the MFO are for self protection and the Rules of Engagement (ROE) allow for this to occur if the conditions warrant it. The individual and unit manning requirements for the MFO are currently fulfilled by eleven nations. In 1984, the high water mark for manning saw about 2,700 peacekeepers assigned to the force. Today the total number of peace keepers in the MFO averages about 1,600 personnel. This gradual reduction in numbers of peace keepers is a result of efficiencies gained by the observers over time as it has conducted this mission and

underscores the success of the initial diplomatic groundwork that established the observer mission at its outset.

The observer force is led by a general officer, who by the terms of the treaty cannot be from the same nation as the MFO Director General. This general officer serves as the MFO Force Commander and operates out of the north base camp near El Gora, Egypt. Zone C is divided into three sections in which three infantry battalions occupy remote observation sites, check points, and roving patrols to observe and report. Zone C is configured with a Fijian infantry battalion in the north, a Colombian infantry battalion in the center, and a US infantry battalion in the south (see Figure 1). The US infantry battalion has the responsibility to run the south base camp for the MFO, which is located near Sharm el Sheik, Egypt. The position of these three infantry units is based on historical demographical locations that are key terrain for control of the Sinai or for access to the Red Sea. The remaining forces assigned to the MFO provide combat support and combat service support capabilities to the infantry battalions, the Italian coastal patrol unit, and the civilian observation group as they conduct their observation and reporting requirements to accomplish the MFO's mission.

For the past 26 years the dedicated peacekeepers of the MFO have provided the buffer between Egypt and Israel. They have faithfully served as the honest broker between the two nations, reporting any potential violations of the peace accords through diplomatic channels. When an issue is reported, diplomatic and communication efforts are immediately undertaken through the MFO offices in Cairo, Tel Aviv, and in Rome to ensure communication is ongoing in order to resolve tensions that, in the past would have potentially ignited the region into an armed conflict.

Findings and Recommendations

There are some who say that from a US military perspective this mission has been a success, and that in this current era of persistent conflict, our focus and assets should be turned to a more relevant purpose. This may be a tempting thought, but before we seriously consider this move we need to relook the longstanding conflict between these two nations, the region, and our own national interests; our original reasons for committing to this peace effort; and then consider the potential cost of prematurely removing US military commitment from this proven peacekeeping effort.

Without a doubt, the tactical and operational mission of the MFO has been successful; it has achieved its desired end state of sustained peace between Egypt and Israel. The MFO has proven to be a cost effective solution to the conflict between these two nations now for over 26 years. After all, no armed hostility has erupted between these two nations since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Is it time to consider disengaging from this mature mission? No, it is not. The conditions needed to exist before we can remove the forces on the ground maintaining buffer between the two sides have not yet occurred.

The peace treaty established between the two nations has binding restrictions that still require independent oversight. Until Israel and Egypt can sit down on their own accord, agree to the restrictions, and then impose them through self-regulation and trust between their two nations, we must maintain a vital buffer between them. Our original national strategic objectives for this mission remain valid; we simply risk failure if we do not support this mission with US military forces participating in the MFO.

Synchronized with the MFO's success, has been the robust and enduring diplomatic and economic actions that the US has delivered to this effort since the time

of the Camp David accords. Each year the US government delivers approximately 3 billion US dollars in foreign aid to Israel, and 2 billion dollars to Egypt. A significant portion of these dollars for both parties are earmarked for military aid and technology sales from the US.⁴⁴ The peace that the MFO enabled has allowed for diplomatic trust to be built in a three nation corps between the US, Egypt, and Israel, one that has been the foundation for regional security and peaceful co-existence in the region. These tools of US national power have enabled the peace process, but to date have not been used to bring about serious negotiation to require either side to work to self-regulate the border between them. These economic rewards have been a key enabler to the overall success of the peace effort, and the diplomatic trust between both sides has a solid foundation. They must then be the leverage points to bring the two former belligerents to the table to determine how to live as peaceful regional neighbors before any serious consideration to remove the MFO forces on the ground between them has occurred.

Our nation's stated National Security Strategy objectives are to "enhance our security; to bolster America's economic prosperity; and to promote democracy abroad."⁴⁵ The MFO mission has directly supported our objectives; we must ensure we have fully established the environment for long term peace before we remove the buffer on the ground.

If the US attempts to prematurely withdraw its peacekeepers on the ground in the Sinai, the withdrawal of the remaining peacekeeping contingents and their peacekeepers would soon follow. The potential effects of this withdrawal could draw us back to where we were postured at the end of the 1973 war. This would cause a crisis situation that would be unacceptable for Israel, Egypt, the region, or the rest of the free

world, one that would potentially lead to an all-out uprising within an already unstable region.

Only through the diplomatic achievement of leading both Egypt and Israel to commitment of self-monitoring of their borders, and diplomatic trust between themselves could we consider removal of the MFO from the Sinai.

Transportability of Success

If we could transfer the MFO from the Sinai to another location, or replicated the MFO to support peace along another of Israel's borders, would it have similar results? The Arab-Israeli peace process remains essential in achieving regional stability, a fundamental national US interest. Under President Clinton's administration, Presidential Decision Directive 25 states that the United States will support well defined peace-operations, and that they should not be open ended commitments, but linked to concrete political solutions.⁴⁶

With this directive in mind, there is potential for success of this peacekeeping model in regard to an independent peacekeeping effort with Israel's other borders, specifically with Syria and Lebanon. We must however consider that the peace treaty being monitored and supported in the Sinai by the MFO was signed by both Egypt and Israel prior to the MFO establishing operations there. They monitor and enforce accords agreed upon by both sides to achieve and maintain peace between them. The key to success in this example or any other peacekeeping endeavor is in the diplomatic framework required to establish such an undertaking in the first place. In other words, the conditions for the success of peacekeepers on the ground can only occur through agreements reached through honest negotiations and diplomacy prior to the

commitment of a peacekeeping force. In this model, the precursor must include written peace treaties between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon, and only then could a peacekeeping force on the ground be considered.

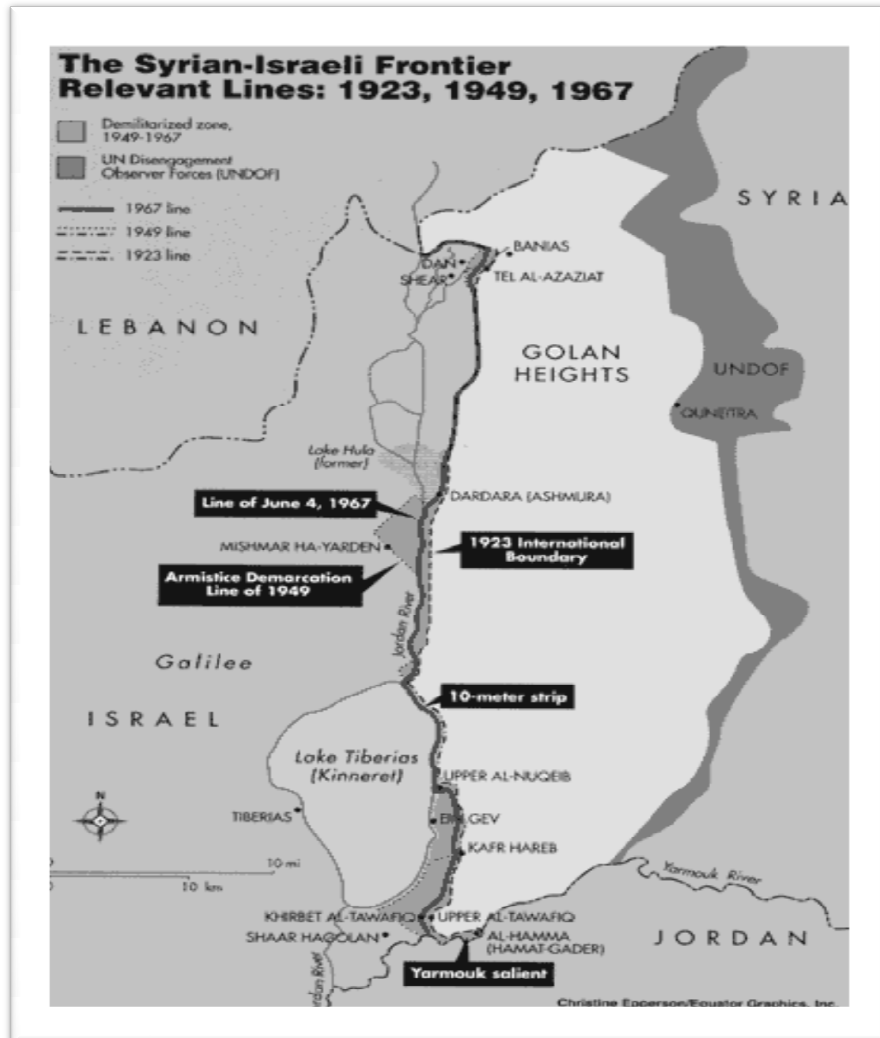


Figure 2: Golan Heights⁴⁷

The geographic construct of the Golan Heights (see Figure 2) would allow for a natural buffer zone similar to the one found in the Sinai. A smaller but still effective buffer zone could be created between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon.

This model for peace could only begin and then sustain itself through a truthful desire for peace by all sides. The diplomatic, economic, and independent military peacekeeping force required to make the MFO the success it has been would need to be implemented in a similar fashion in order to transport the model into a location such as described above. Until that time occurs, no amount of any nation's military serving on the ground can achieve the desired outcome by just occupying the ground between the two parties.

Conclusion

There has been a long history of conflict in the Middle East. Since its inception, Israel has been the center of the friction within the region. After 50 years of conflict between Egypt and Israel, there is now sustained peace. This is a direct result of determined diplomatic negotiations occurring before the commitment of peacekeepers, economic incentives that benefit both nations, an independent and impartial peacekeeping force between the two sides, and responsive diplomatic layers built within the system. Each portion of this recipe for peace is interdependent on the other: the removal of one ingredient before either side is completely willing to trust the other and live side by side without oversight will cause the process to crumble.

This model, with the proper conditions set in place, has the potential to be exported to other contested areas between Israel and its neighbors, supporting US national interests and benefitting the region, if not the whole global community.

Endnotes

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